

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
ROY KINDLESPIRE

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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
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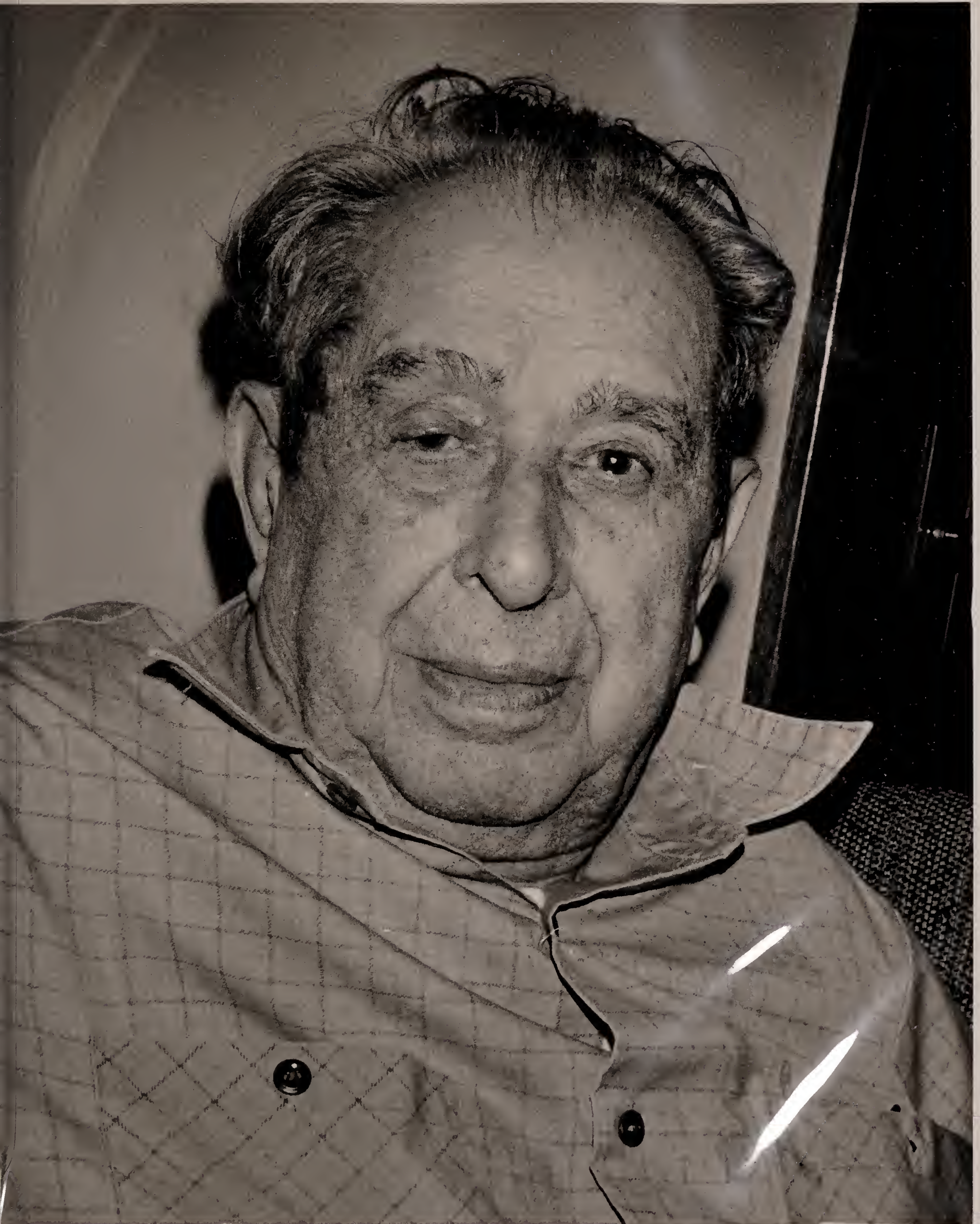
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517 E Benton St
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Morris Ill
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Nov 5, 1974
(date)


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FRULAND: This is an interview with Mr. Roy Kindlespire for the Oral History Program, by Jim Fruland, at 517 East Benton Street, Morris, Illinois, on November 5, 1974 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

FRULAND: Roy, could you please tell me where and when you were born?

KINDLESPIRE: I was born in Morris, Illinois on November 25, 1893.

FRULAND: At that time, what occupation did your father have?

KINDLESPIRE: He run a transferral line.

FRULAND: What did that consist of? Was it a horse-drawn thing?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. It was horse drawn and had about ten teams of wagons.

FRULAND: As a little boy did you help your father with these?

KINDLESPIRE: No. My father died when I was 12 years old. We agreed that my mother would take care of it for about three years; then she sold the business.

FRULAND: As a young boy did you work anywhere?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. In 1908 my mother remarried, and they moved to Iowa. They worked on a farm out there in Iowa.

FRULAND: How did you get to Iowa?

KINDLESPIRE: By train.

FRULAND: Was the cost very much back then?

KINDLESPIRE: No. I think it cost around eleven dollars.

FRULAND: As a boy did you have very many hobbies?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. Too many hobbies come to think of it! (Laughter)

FRULAND: Did you fish quite a bit?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. I still do.

FRULAND: About where did you go in Iowa to fish?

KINDLESPIRE: In Lauerns, Iowa. It was Pocohontas County.

FRULAND: How did you get started as a carpenter?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, my mother died in 1911. I came back to Morris again, because I had relatives here. A friend of the family, his name was Henry Taylor, he was a contractor here. He met me one day and asked me if I wanted to learn the carpenter trade. And I told him yes.

FRULAND: How old were you then?

KINDLESPIRE: I was seventeen.

FRULAND: Did you get through school then?

KINDLESPIRE: I got through the eighth grade.

FRULAND: What type of pay did they receive back then?

KINDLESPIRE: They started out at \$1.80 a day or \$10.80 a week.

FRULAND: Did that money go quite a long ways?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, I paid four dollars for board. The trouble was you didn't work for very many days. You had to watch yourself every minute.

FRULAND: Where did you stay when you first came back?

KINDLESPIRE: With my grandmother.

FRULAND: For constructing a building, what type of tools did you use?

KINDLESPIRE: Same as they are now, not much difference. They were all hand tools and hand saws.

FRULAND: Did you go into building houses or just what type of construction did you do?

KINDLESPIRE: I never built for myself, always for a contractor.

FRULAND: You were not the only one that was helping with the firm?

KINDLESPIRE: No. There was probably 10 or 15 carpenters. I was just an apprentice.

FRULAND: How long did you stay an apprentice?

KINDLESPIRE: Four years.

FRULAND: Did you go on your own then?

KINDLESPIRE: No. In 1917 I joined the Army. I had just finished my apprenticeship that spring in April; in May I went into the Army.

FRULAND: When you were in the Army, what branch of service were you in?

KINDLESPIRE: The Engineers.

FRULAND: Did you go overseas?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

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FRULAND: Where did you go overseas?

KINDLESPIRE: I was in the St. Mahills Sector; that's on the edge of the Argonne; and then the Prunell Woods.

FRULAND: Was that right in the middle of all the action?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. It was just twelve miles in front of Metz.

FRULAND: While you were in the engineering corps, what did you work on, airplanes?

KINDLESPIRE: Oh, no. That's just nice work for the infantry. (Laughter)

FRULAND: Oh, I see. How long were you in the service then?

KINDLESPIRE: Twenty-two months.

FRULAND: Were they all overseas?

KINDLESPIRE: No. I was about thirteen months in France and all the rest in the states.

FRULAND: Was the equipment they used in the war modern for its time?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. They used liberty trucks and some mules.

FRULAND: Then after you got out of the service, what did you do?

KINDLESPIRE: I came back and started doing carpentry work with C. A. Baker.

FRULAND: How long did you work for him?

KINDLESPIRE: I suppose eighteen years.

FRULAND: At what age did you retire?

KINDLESPIRE: I retired at sixty-six. I worked for the government for 9 years. I was foreman of the CC Camp.

FRULAND: What type of work did that consist of?

KINDLESPIRE: That was like doing the parks around Gebhard Woods and McKinley Woods. I also was reconstructing along the I & M Canal.

FRULAND: What type of. . . did they build houses?

KINDLESPIRE: They built houses but not very many. They did remodel a few. And they built shelters, toilets, and picnic houses.

FRULAND: And after this came the depression?

KINDLESPIRE: This was after the depression.

FRULAND: During the depression did you get to work that much?

KINDLESPIRE: That's when I worked for the CCC, during the depression.

FRULAND: So you struggled through that pretty good?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: What year did you get married?

KINDLESPIRE: Nineteen hundred twenty-six.

FRULAND: Did you have a fairly big wedding?

KINDLESPIRE: Not at all. I just went and got married. (Laughter.)

FRULAND: What was the transportation like in Morris; did they have many cars?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. There was quite a few cars. They had one going up Benton Street here; and they had run one along Yorkville. They were not like the cars they have now, but there was quite a few.

FRULAND: Did you travel much back then?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, we went quite a lot. I used to go to Alabama, Florida. I went to Alabama two or three years and then Florida.

FRULAND: Just for a vacation?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. I had some land down in Alabama, so I went there for that one reason.

FRULAND: Did you travel by car?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: How long did it take to go to Alabama by car?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, you would leave here in the morning around five o'clock, and you would be down in Alabama the next day about three o'clock. You would have to stay the night in some motel or something.

FRULAND: It wasn't anything different than it is now?

KINDLESPIRE: No. It is not really different, except the prices are a lot different.

FRULAND: Did you build this house?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: What year did you build it?

KINDLESPIRE: Nineteen hundred twenty-six.

FRULAND: How much did the material cost in building back then?

KINDLESPIRE: All the material in the house including the plaster, lap, brickwork, and cementwork, about \$500. The labor was donated.

(Laughter)

FRULAND: Probably cost three times that amount now, I suppose.

KINDLESPIRE: You couldn't start the house now for less than twenty.

FRULAND: I see.

KINDLESPIRE: The total lumber bill and the materials, I believe, ran \$1900.

FRULAND: I was wondering if the downtown area of Morris has drastically changed since back then.

KINDLESPIRE: Oh, yes. It is lots better.

FRULAND: What are some of the differences that you can recall?

KINDLESPIRE: How far back do you want to go?

FRULAND: Around 1920, I guess.

KINDLESPIRE: A lot of stores have been remodeled in the downtown area like the banks. Most of the stores have been remodeled on Liberty Street and on Washington Street.

FRULAND: How about the roads back then in general?

KINDLESPIRE: They have paved all of these streets in the east end of town from Benton down to Main Street since about 1927.

FRULAND: Was that a major project of the city?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, it was.

FRULAND: Do you remember your first car you ever owned?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: What was it?

KINDLESPIRE: Chevrolet Coupe.

FRULAND: What year was it?

KINDLESPIRE: Nineteen hundred twenty-five, probably. It cost \$720.

FRULAND: Money sure doesn't go very far today, does it?

KINDLESPIRE: No.

FRULAND: For entertainment during the weekend did they have much in town to offer? Did you have to travel out of town?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, we used to go to Joliet to a show up there because they had vaudeville. Most everybody liked that. You would go up in the streetcar, when the streetcars were still running for seventy cents round-trip.

FRULAND: I was wondering if you remember when they built the newer bridge that they have now?

KINDLESPIRE: It was in 1934 or '35 if I remember right. They dedicated Gebhard Woods at the same time.

FRULAND: Do you remember much about the construction of the bridge?

KINDLESPIRE: No, I know nothing about that.

FRULAND: Did you mostly work on frame houses?

KINDLESPIRE: It was mostly frame houses and store fronts.

FRULAND: Approximately how long would it take you to build a frame house?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, of course, that depends on the size of it a lot. I suppose the average would take about three months or three months and a half.

FRULAND: When this man first asked you if you wanted to go into business, did you think about it or did you just. . .?

KINDLESPIRE: No, I wanted to stay where I was at. I was doing all right where I was at.

FRULAND: You must of liked to stay in?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, because the hours were good and I didn't want to be tied too much.

FRULAND: You worked for C. A. Baker eighteen years then?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, altogether. Then I worked for Glass and Harder, for Box Salt Brothers, and then for Narvick's.

FRULAND: Before you retired, who did you work for?

KINDLESPIRE: Narvick's

FRULAND: What was the pay you earned, the hourly pay when you retired?

KINDLESPIRE: I believe around \$1.50 an hour.

FRULAND: Could you see a great deal of progress in the making of tools and the making of fabrics such as from the beginning until your retirement?

KINDLESPIRE: Oh, yes. There has been a lot that has gradually gotten bigger and bigger. Of course, power tools have come into the picture in the last fifteen or twenty years.

FRULAND: Did that make it a lot easier?

KINDLESPIRE: It made it faster.

FRULAND: On communications. . . I am just getting back to some earlier things. Were communications that good or did it have some room for improvement?

KINDLESPIRE: Naturally, it had room for more improvement. It was fairly good then, too.

FRULAND: Did they have telephones?

KINDLESPIRE: Oh, yes.

FRULAND: Were they the type you cranked up or just what type were they?

KINDLESPIRE: No. That was way back in 1910 or 1911 when you cranked

them. I had one at home. I remember the telephone number even.

(Laughter)

FRULAND: Have the newspapers changed?

KINDLESPIRE: They have come a long ways, too. There was three papers in town at one the time -- The Herald, The Post, and The Central.

FRULAND: Did that finally just combine and be one Herald office now?

KINDLESPIRE: I really don't remember. It seems like the Herald had the best paper and took over.

FRULAND: When you started building this house in 1926, was there many houses in this area then, or were most of them just starting to be built?

KINDLESPIRE: They were just starting to build? Well, there was the two houses where Graham and Barber live. They were built already. They were the first ones. There was about three houses.

FRULAND: Was it unusual back then for the houses to be brick?

KINDLESPIRE: There was some. Most of the houses were brick veneer, but there was some brick houses, too. Like the Gebhard's and Long's, those houses were all brick. In that category, yes, there were some brick houses.

FRULAND: After you got married and settled, the neighborhood really grew after that time?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, that's right.

FRULAND: Do you own this lot?

KINDLESPIRE: I bought it from Boderick, the McIlliot subdivision. He was heir to it, I think, or his wife was.

FRULAND: How much did you pay for the lot?

KINDLESPIRE: I believe \$750.

FRULAND: How big is the total land?

KINDLESPIRE: Fifty by one hundred twenty-two.

FRULAND: Would that be your average lot size now?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. There might be one or two sixty-foot lots on the block. I don't know for sure. I know there is one.

FRULAND: Did you go to very many baseball games in Chicago?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: How did you get there?

KINDLESPIRE: Mostly by train; or sometimes, if someone had a car, you would go in by car.

FRULAND: Did you ever get to see Babe Ruth play?

KINDLESPIRE: No, I never did.

FRULAND: I was wondering - back in the '30's everyone seemed to be seeing gangsters. Were they that prominent around here as such, or was it just something Chicago had and nobody else?

KINDLESPIRE: No. Morris was always a pretty good town about that -- they never had anything bad.

FRULAND: You said you got married in 1927?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes.

FRULAND: Where did you meet your wife?

KINDLESPIRE: Double dated, I guess. That night went to Tibbley's Theatre in Chicago.

FRULAND: Do you have any children?

KINDLESPIRE: Just one daughter; she lives in Springfield.

FRULAND: What year did your wife pass away?

KINDLESPIRE: Two years ago. That would be two years next month.

FRULAND: That would be 1972.

KINDLESPIRE: That's right.

FRULAND: When you were growing up, did your father and you go fishing quite a bit?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes, we used to go on picnics and go into a Club over south of Morris -- Patterson Club, they used to call it. (Kindlespire shows Fruland a picture of the club.)

FRULAND: Is this the picture of the club?

KINDLESPIRE: Yes. (Kindlespire tells Fruland the names of the people in the picture.)

FRULAND: How old is this picture?

KINDLESPIRE: I suppose I was about eight years old, and I'm eighty-one in November.

FRULAND: So it's about seventy-two years old. Where was the club located?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, you go over to the pines and turn. The road went to the north; it was on the creek. It was a private road.

FRULAND: Was that members only?

KINDLESPIRE: That's right.

FRULAND: Do you still do a lot of fishing?

KINDLESPIRE: Well, I've cut down quite a bit I'll tell you. (Laughter)
I still do some.

FRULAND: The stuff to keep you busy.

KINDLESPIRE: That's right.

FRULAND: I really can't think of too much else to ask you. It's been real nice talking to you.

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